

## Discussion Questions *(continued)*

**9.** Both Francis and Cha-Cha have a precarious relationship with belief, both in religion and the supernatural. How does each character's beliefs shift over time, and what effect do those changes have on their relationship to others?

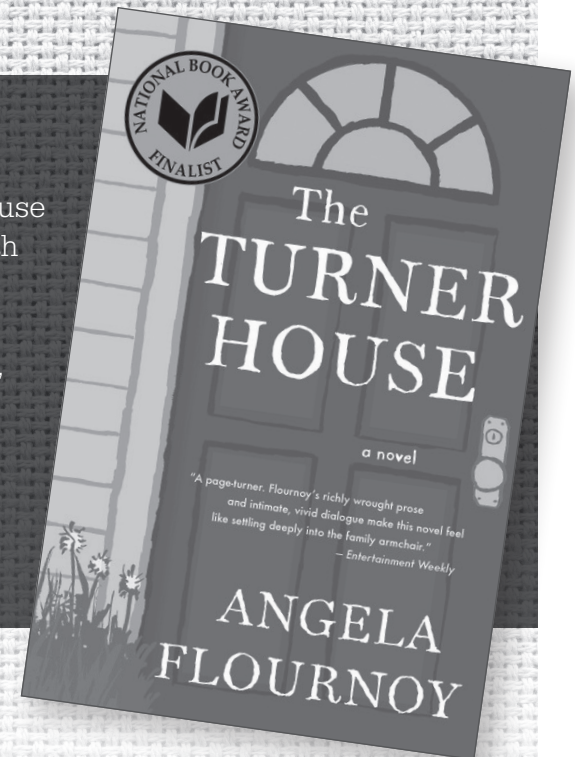
**10.** Compare and contrast Lelah and Cha-Cha's reactions to the news of Viola's worsened condition. What do their reactions tell us about their similarities and differences? What do we learn about their roles in the family?

**11.** The move from Arkansas to Detroit is very important to Turner family history, and it places them among the hundreds of thousands of African Americans who moved North during the Great Migration. How is Francis and Viola's relationship changed by the move? How do the challenges they face in Detroit contribute to the way they raise their children?

**12.** At its core, do you see the Turners as a strongly bonded family? What does it mean for a family to be bonded, especially when people move further away from one another and start their own families?

# Book Club in a Bag

"[A] dynamite Detroit debut... The Turner House belongs on the shelf with the very finest books about one of America's most dynamic, tortured, and resilient cities..."  
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## Author

**Angela Flournoy** is the author of *The Turner House*, which was a finalist for the National Book Award and the Center for Fiction First Novel Prize, a Summer 2015 Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers selection, and a New York Times Sunday Book Review Editors' Choice.

She is a National Book Foundation "5 Under 35" Honoree for 2015. Her fiction has appeared in the *Paris Review*, and she has written for the *New York Times*, *New Republic* and *Los Angeles Times*.

Flournoy was raised in southern California by a mother from Los Angeles and a father from Detroit where she spent summers visiting her grandparents. She received her B.A. from the University of Southern California and her M.F.A. from the Iowa Writers' Workshop. She has taught at the University of Iowa and The Writer's Foundry at St. Joseph's College in Brooklyn. She is joining the faculty at Southern New Hampshire University's low-residency MFA program in Spring 2016.

*From the author's website.*

## Book Summary

The Turners have lived on Yarrow Street for over fifty years. Their house has seen thirteen children grown and gone — and some returned; it has seen the arrival of grandchildren, the fall of Detroit's East Side, and the loss of a father. The house still stands despite abandoned lots, an embattled city, and the inevitable shift outward to the suburbs. But now, as ailing matriarch Viola finds herself forced to leave her home and move in with her eldest son, the family discovers that the house is worth just a tenth of its mortgage. The Turner children are called home to decide its fate and to reckon with how each of their pasts haunts — and shapes — their family's future.

Praised by Ayana Mathis as "utterly moving" and "un-putdownable," *The Turner House* brings us a colorful, complicated brood full of love and pride, sacrifice and unlikely inheritances. It's a striking examination of the price we pay for our dreams and futures, and the ways in which our families bring us home.

*From the publisher.*

## Discussion Questions

1. Throughout the book, characters struggle with the concept of belonging — to blood relations, in-laws, and even the city of Detroit. What does it mean to "belong" in a group? How do characters come to terms with their own feelings of belonging by the end of the novel?
2. The city of Detroit plays a large role in the way characters see themselves, particularly for Francis Turner in the 1940s. How does the city itself contribute to the story of the Turner family? Can you imagine a similar story taking place elsewhere, or is the story inextricably tied to Detroit?
3. Cha-Cha sees himself as the patriarch of the family, but he also has trouble getting his siblings to listen to him. In what ways does Cha-Cha's view of himself as the leader prevent his siblings from trusting or respecting him?
4. In their final meeting (p. 241), Alice tells Cha-Cha that she thinks his haint has made him feel extraordinary, and that she doesn't think he really wants to let it go. Do you agree with her observation? What might the haint provide to Cha-Cha that he otherwise lacks in his life?
5. Alice describes Cha-Cha as the prime minister of his family, and Viola as the queen; she has the title, but is not concerned with day-to-day governance. What is your impression of Viola when you first meet her in the novel, and how does that impression change over time?
6. As the baby, Lelah thinks she has missed out on many of the best moments and secrets in Turner family history. How might her role as the youngest have contributed to her addiction to gambling? Do you think she has truly turned a corner by the novel's end?
7. Lelah and David become close very quickly. Why do you think Lelah is drawn to David, and why does David not break things off when he finds out about Lelah staying on Yarrow Street?
8. Troy is the only sibling not present at the party that takes place the end of the novel. Did you get the impression that he is on the path to change? Why or why not?

*More Discussion Questions on back.*